

JUNE 15

1 Kings 14:1-15:24

There is something that happens when you read the Bible year after year. I'm trying not to "ruin" this for you, but it is hard to resist not mentioning it. When you read this information in Kings, it might be completely new for you. Later, you'll notice that much of what you read here will be mentioned again in Chronicles, but in some cases there will be more detail or explanation. Then, when you look at these records and events in Kings next year, you'll read these stories and go, "Wait, there's more to what happened. He did this or that and it's not here." You will naturally begin to compare the records of Kings and Chronicles and it will add another dimension to the lives of these men. It will also show you a lot about God, in how He dealt with them and how He works with us. The way God designed the Bible sparks connections and provides interesting clues that inspire curiosity and learning, but you have to stay in the Bible year after year to have this take place. And the point of all of this is knowing, following and loving the Lord.

1 Kings 14

Vs. 1-20 Since this event is recorded for us by God, the death of Jeroboam's son must have become a sign for Israel. This event was common knowledge. When the son died, Jeroboam and everyone else should have turned to God, but no one turned to follow God. Signs don't necessarily make people believe. Notice that the fulfillment of this judgment came in two parts, years apart. You would think that if they had responded properly after the first part, God might have had mercy on them for the second part. God gave chances, but there was no repentance.

V. 2 So what is all this about? There are a lot of things happening here. First, why didn't Jeroboam ask for guidance from the calves and priests and other stuff he had set up? Obviously they didn't work. Second, in this time of need, even Jeroboam knew that the religious system he had set up wasn't real, but was there to keep the people from leaving him as king. Third, even in his need, Jeroboam didn't want anyone to see him send his wife to where the tabernacle had been to inquire of a real prophet of the Lord. This was an example of the total human irrationality that is so commonly caused by sin. We just get used to it. It is also interesting that Jeroboam sent his wife to the prophet whom God had used to tell him he would be king. Jeroboam knew how to pursue the Lord. He just didn't want to.

V. 8 David was a man after God's own heart because he never worshiped anyone or anything other than the Lord. David fell, but David always loved God and never bowed the knee to an idol. Yet even here, there is a sense of the blessing God had given to Jeroboam. Even though God made an everlasting covenant with David, He still gave Jeroboam the kingship of northern Israel because of the idolatry of Solomon.

V. 9 The only ones who came before Jeroboam were Saul, David and Solomon, yet Jeroboam was worse than even Solomon. Solomon did not force Israel to sin in worshiping other gods. This had been Solomon's personal sin, fueled by his passion for his foreign wives. You can see that Jeroboam made a very forceful and calculated political decision to lead Israel into idolatry to keep them from returning to Jerusalem. Solomon didn't force the nation into idolatry. He just modeled it. Jeroboam led Israel into ruin and punishment.

V. 11 Keep the wording of this curse in mind. You'll hear it again.

V. 13 Isn't this interesting? God not only used the death of this son for judgment on Jeroboam and as a sign for the nation, but there was an element of compassion in God taking the child out of this situation.

V. 14 Notice that God would *appoint* this king, but this king will also receive the curse mentioned in v. 11.

Vs. 15-16 Here, the exile is promised to the northern kingdom.

Vs. 17-18 I wonder why she went home.

V. 20 God allowed this ungodly king to reign 22 years. That ought to be astounding and tell us something about God.

Vs. 21-31 Rehoboam was also evil before the Lord. Note that his mother was an Ammonite.

V. 21 When you read about the awful and foolish decision that Rehoboam made at the beginning of his reign that split the kingdom, you think that maybe he was in his teens or early twenties and the guys he listened to were his drinking buddies. Look how old he was.

Vs. 25-28 This happened as a result of the evil that Rehoboam allowed to grow in Judah. For all the disobedience and sacrifice involved in making treaties with Egypt, Egypt still took everything. Very ironic. Shishak was the guy who had kept Jeroboam safe from Solomon (1 Kings 11:40).

V. 28 Notice the showmanship when Rehoboam went to the temple after this humbling. He still felt he needed to save face. I'll bet his worship in the temple was just as sincere. There will be more said about Rehoboam in Chronicles.

This is like another parallel between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Both were spoken to by a man of God. They responded differently. Both were insincere in seeking the Lord and used theatrics.

1 Kings 15:1-24

Vs. 1-8 In 2 Chronicles 13, we'll hear more about Abijam, spelled Abijah in Chronicles. There are three things noted here about Abijam's short, three-year reign.

First, his mother (Rehoboam's wife) was related to Absalom.

Second, vs. 4-5 testify to God's grace, mercy and faithfulness in light of the ungodliness of these kings in David's lineage.

Third, Asa, Abijam's son, became king.

Vs. 9-24 Asa is the first of the godly kings of Judah after Solomon. When we get to 2 Chronicles 14-16, you'll learn more about Asa. What is written here is just a very brief summary of his reign.

Vs. 9-15 summarize some of what he did well in leading the people.

V. 13 Asa meant business, even removing his grandmother from any place of influence. It may be that his mother had died and he made his grandmother the queen mother.

V. 14 Notice what it says about Asa. This is said in the context of remaining true to the worship of Yahweh. It is good to remember the context of how this statement is made, because we'll see that Asa will have his troubles; yet in all of them, he never worshiped anyone other than Yahweh. That is important.

Vs. 16-22 So, what do you think Asa did wrong? You'll have to read about Asa in 2 Chronicles to figure out the real depth of what he did here. It was a very human thing to do, but we'll see that Asa should have known better. Each king had something that ate through his faith when he grew older or more secure. As disciples, we all have this kind of "faith-destroying" element in us. The ultimate question for us as we follow Christ in this life in the harvest is, "Who is our Lord and our help?"

V. 23 The disease in his feet is an important thing, but you won't understand it yet. It is actually a little bit mind-blowing.

Acts 10:1-23

This event will open the door for the church to reach the Gentile world.

Vs. 1-8 It is important to understand that Cornelius worshiped the God of the Jews. He was a "God Fearer," but he wasn't a circumcised convert. Notice what it says about him in v. 2. Cornelius wasn't just a nice guy worshiping anything.

Rome enlisted soldiers from every land, but the Italian Cohort were true-blue Italians who were used in places where loyalty to Rome couldn't be risked. Caesarea was important to Rome. Years later, Paul would be imprisoned in a Roman palace/fortress in Caesarea.

V. 4 I find it amazing that his prayers had become a memorial before God. God promises that if unbelievers seek Him, they will find Him. It is true that none of us would seek God, if God didn't add things to our lives that encourage us to seek Him. Still, after that encouragement on God's part, there seems to be an element of seeking that is up to us and God honors it.

V. 7 Not only did Cornelius waste no time in obeying, he sent two servants and a soldier. These servants would have been stewards, and the soldier would have been their protection. All of them must have been loyal and devoted to Cornelius. They probably were influenced by his life and love for God.

V. 8 This is funny. Literally, Cornelius exegeted (explained) everything to his men.

Vs. 9-23 God was coordinating this entire event.

Vs. 12-16 Now, Peter was a true-blue Jew. In spite of the fact that the law was no longer binding, he had still not had his first pork chop, and lobster tail was foreign to his lips. God waited until Peter was hungry. That this vision was repeated three times meant that God had to overwhelm Peter's ingrained way of thinking. But the real test was not about food, it was about another ethnicity. What is also interesting here and may have had an effect on Peter, as he thought over his refusal and emotional difficulty in obeying, was that Peter had denied the Lord and then promised to serve His sheep three times also.

Vs. 17-23 Enter the Gentiles.

Vs. 19-20 This event was so important, and Peter's anti-Gentile upbringing was so ingrained, that the Spirit had to **command** Peter to obey *without hesitation*. Notice how often the Spirit is speaking. Who says He is not a person?

V. 22 Notice that God selected a centurion who was in excellent standing with the Jews. In the Gospels and Acts, you never find a bad centurion. That's kind of interesting. The Jews begged Jesus to heal the centurion's slave in Capernaum (Luke 7) because he was not only a "God fearer," but because he loved Israel and built them their synagogue. God was going to use this godly Roman Gentile to break down a huge wall for the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

V. 23 We'll see later, that in spite of Cornelius' good reputation, this event didn't sit well with some Christians.

Psalm 133

The worship in Jerusalem three times a year was what kept Israel unified as a nation, focused on God's love for them. Unity is a true blessing and a sign of God's presence.

V. 1 David knew of disunity and hatred. He ran from Saul for ten years and then fought a civil war for seven years. Later David ran from Absalom and faced another, almost, civil war. Here, David is saying that unity is found in Zion, serving and worshiping God.

V. 2 Frankly, having olive oil poured on my head, running down my beard onto my clothes doesn't feel like blessing to me. I think the images must represent unity as covering and consecrating the people and the land. In that sense, the unity God gives is what makes us able to come before Him.

V. 3 This unity is also what gives life to us just as that covering dew gave life to the land. Without God's provision of unity, there is only dryness and a lack of fruit.

You would think in the church, with Christ and our salvation and our mission, that unity would be a given. It wasn't in Acts; it wasn't in the New Testament letters and it isn't now. Unity in Christ is something that must be worked at and sought for from God. Sometimes I think unity in the harvest is almost a miracle in itself. It is the gift that allows a group to come together in Him and to bear fruit together. For me, biblical unity happens in Christ in the harvest. That was the kind of unity Paul had with the Philippians, and I think he points to the mission also in his prayer for the Romans in Romans 15:5-6, *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Proverbs 17:7-8

It is interesting that one of the pieces of the armor of the Spirit is truth. It protects us. I had a thought as I read this today. The power to hold to the truth and resist a bribe comes from our hope in God. Money can provide comfort or an answer to a need, but if our hope is fixed on God, our comfort isn't important and He is the answer to our needs. Yet how do you learn this hope unless you are led by God into troubled times and learn to hope in Christ alone. We don't need to tap the "human resources" department, especially if those resources come with an agenda. We learn to rely on our resources as if they were magic and open doors for us. Better to have unfulfilled needs and to be wholly focused on the Lord, than to look to our own magical ways to meet our needs, but to deny Christ by our actions. I would rather remain in need and have to cling to my hope in Him, than be satisfied in anything else. Even if it means looking like a fool, I'd rather be satisfied with waiting on Him than developing the skill to open doors and not need Him.